



2018 Lections for Worship at Sunshine Cathedral



2018 Lections for Worship at Sunshine Cathedral

Each entry offers:

- ~ Date
- ~ Theme/Sermon Title
- ~ Readings (Canonical readings, unless otherwise noted, are from **NRSV**, sometimes slightly adapted as indicated by ellipses and brackets)
- ~ Prayer to follow the final reading (written by Durrell Watkins)...supports the readings/theme of the day
- ~ *Healing Rays prayer (the prayer card given to people who come forward for anointing)...supports the readings/theme of the day (HR prayers written by Durrell Watkins)
- ~ Stewardship Thought for the day (read aloud before offering is taken in worship)
- ~ a suggested hymn to be used in worship

The cycle of readings follows the Narrative Lectionary (a project of Luther Seminary) January – Pentecost. After Pentecost, there is a mix of Narrative Lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary readings. There are also contemporary readings added for many (but not all) of the Sundays.

The Liturgical Calendar is observed for the most part. Epiphany isn't featured in 2018, nor is All Saints/All Souls. What will be featured, at least in part, are: Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, LGBTQ Pride, Thanksgiving, Reign of Christ, Advent, and Christmas.

In addition to the Readings (which feature the stories of the bible), most of *Spirit & Truth* (SC's daily devotional magazine) reflections are based on a verse from the assigned readings for the **Daily Office** used by the Episcopal Church. We are making an effort to get the bible not only into people's hands, but into their hearts (and to liberate it from oppressive interpretations).

**Healing Rays" comes from Malachi 4.2 and is in keeping with Sunshine Cathedral's "sunshine" theme...Our prayer cards are "Healing Rays", our newsletter is "The Sun Burst", our Internet Talk Show is "Sharing the Light", etc.

CONTENTS

Jan...p.	3
Feb...p.	5
Mar...p.	8
Apr...p.	10
May...p.	13
Jun...p.	15
Jul...p.	17
Aug...p.	20
Sep...p.	23
Oct...p.	26
Nov...p.	28
Dec...p.	30

Jan 7 – Seeing Possibilities

Ernest Holmes wrote:

“O Soul of mine, look out and see; look up and know thy freedom. Be not cast down nor dismayed; be uplifted within me and exult, for thy salvation has come. Behold the wonders of the Great Whole and the marvels of the Universe. Look out and see thy good. It is not afar off, but is at hand. Prepare thyself to accept and believe; to know and live. Let Life enter and live through thee, Soul of mine, and rejoice that thou hast vision so fair and so complete. Rejoice that the Perfect Whole is so completely reflected through thee.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 1.35-50):

...John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.”

They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God!...” Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.”

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, by inheritance or by choice, we call ourselves followers of Jesus. May we follow faithfully as disciples in the present age. Amen.*

Healing Rays Prayer

Dear God, with your help I will see and seize blessings today and every day. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Giving first to God is an act of stewardship and an expression of faith.” Chris Deets

Suggested Hymn: *I Want Jesus to Go with Me* (New Century Hymnal, aka NCH, aka New Century #490)

Jan 14 – Calling Forth the Good

Ernest Holmes wrote:

“I am one with Perfect Action. Everything that I do, say or think is quickened into action through this right understanding and this correct knowing. The harmonious action of the Great Whole operates through me now and at all times. I am carried along by this Right Action and am compelled to do the right thing at the right time. There is nothing in me that can hinder this action from flowing through me.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 2.2-11):

Jesus and his disciples had...been invited to [a] wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, the wine of joyful celebration flowed freely at Jesus' command. May we recognize the goodness within us and command it to flow freely as well. Amen.*

Jan 14 Healing Rays Prayer

Dear God, help me to see the goodness all around me, and within me. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Honor God with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your produce. Then will your barns be filled with grain; with new wine your vats will overflow.” Proverbs 3.9-10

Suggested Hymn: *Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling* (NCH #59)

Jan 21 – We Can Make a Difference

Ernest Holmes wrote:

“I have the power to live the life of good. My power is from on High, it cannot be taken from me; it will not leave me desolate. Power flows through me and is in me, I can now feel and sense it. The power to live is in me and it cannot desert me. It is my power and is continually present.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew (21.12-17):

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers.”

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the [descendant] of David,” they became angry and said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?’”

He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Prayer after readings: *Jesus confronted injustice and exploitation. In his name, let us speak out and rise up for the sake of justice-love. Amen.*

Jan 21 Healing Rays Prayer

Indwelling God, may your light guide me to make wise choices that will bless me and others. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “I want you to be the first in generosity.” Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Suggest Hymn: *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna* (New Century Hymnal #213)

Jan 28 – New Life

We read in the Psalter (Psalm 139.14-15):

I praise you [God], for I am [awesomely] and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 3.1-8, 19-21, NRSV):

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a [religious] leader...He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Prayer after readings: *Mother God, you give us new life. You nurture us and help us grow into our amazing potential. May we embrace the renewal you offer and may we be a healing force in the world. Amen.*

Jan 28 Healing Rays Prayer

Divine Life, you are expressing in, through, and as me today. I am revived and renewed. Alleluia!

Stewardship Thought: “I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.” Maya Angelou

Suggested Hymn: *Come, O Fount of Every Blessing* (NCH #459)

Feb 4 – Thirsting for God

We read in the Psalter (Psalm 42.1-2):

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 4.3-21, 22-26, 28-30, NRSV):

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, “Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John” - although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— he left Judea and started back to Galilee, but he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”

Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship...neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship...in spirit and truth...God is spirit, and those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am [the one]...”

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him.

Prayer after readings: *River of Life, Well of Hope, Flood of Wisdom, Flowing Compassion, Ocean of Grace...today, we drink deeply from you and find our every need perfectly met. Alleluia! Amen.*

Feb 4 Healing Rays Prayer

Living Water, please refresh me today. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “...they gave freely and whole-heartedly to the LORD.” 1 Chronicles 29.9

Suggested Song(s): *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say* (New Century #489); *Fill My Cup, Lord*

Feb 11 – A Miracle Mindset

Helen Keller counseled:

“When we do the best that we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 9.1-21, 24-25):

...[Jesus] saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of [the One] who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the

sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.” The [religious authorities] did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

Prayer after readings: *God of miracles, we know a miracle to be a change of perception, a change of how we see things, a change from fear to love. May we see and seize and share and be grateful for miracles in our lives. Amen.*

Feb 11 Healing Rays Prayer

“Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart.” Help me to see, embrace, and celebrate many blessings in my life. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Jesus (Matthew 6.21)

Suggested Hymn(s): *Be Thou My Vision* (Singing the Living Tradition #20); *I Believe in Miracles* (Praise! #533)

Ash Wednesday, Feb 14 – Affirmation

F. Bernadette Turner wrote:

"Affirmation-prayers can be successfully used in building a rich consciousness. They help you vitalize your words and feelings in communicating with Cosmic Center because they are strong declarations of your beliefs. Affirmation prayers have a tonic-quality. These prayers as mantras add a variation to your prayer-method. Affirmation prayers are an investment, enriching your consciousness and making life less forbidding in disquieting times."

We read in the Psalter (Psalm 23, NKJV):

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

[God] makes me to lie down in green pastures [and] leads me beside the still waters.

[God] restores my soul; [God] leads me in the paths of righteousness...

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

Prayer after readings: *Good Shepherd, we trust you to lead us, guide us, and provide for us. With you we find serenity, courage, and hope. You help us see and seize the possibilities in life. We continue to move forward assured by your constant care. Amen.*

Feb 18 – Renewal

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 11.1-7, 11-14, 16):

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory...” Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”

After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.”

Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

The Story continues (John 11.17, 20-29):

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask...

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and

everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah..."

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

The rest of the Story (32-44):

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping...he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the [onlookers] said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "[God], I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Prayer after readings: *Life-giving God, call us out of our tombs of fear, regret, and despair and coax us out into the light of hope and the fresh, sweet air of joy. Amen.*

Feb 18 Healing Rays Prayer

Liberate us, O God, from tombs of fear, regret, and despair. Call forth the power of hope within us. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "...all which I give, I enjoy in a higher manner through the fact that I give it away." Jean-Paul Sartre

Suggested Hymn: *Rise and be Healed* (Praise! #309)

Feb 25 – Do Something

Arthur Caliendo wrote:

"Worry is one of the greatest momentum blockers...Yet when we confront worry, it vanishes and frees us to move ahead. How can we give up worrying? One effective approach can be found in a simple two-word formula...*Do something!* In other words, take action. When we take action – the earlier the better – we nip worry in the bud...A wise person once said to me, 'Why worry when you can pray?' This though can bring calm...So, the...steps I've found that really let us move ahead despite worry are: First, do something. Second, hold the immobilizing worry up before a higher power. This two part strategy embodies a wonderful internal balance...of action and contemplation. In my experience, it's a combination that works."

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 13.1-15):

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the [next]. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. [Schemers] had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that [he] had [been] given all things...and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

Prayer after readings: *Divine Love, you flowed through Jesus as he compassionately and humbly offered rest and refreshment to his disciples. As followers of Jesus, may we offer loving, compassionate service to those who are tired, who ache, who need a healing touch. Amen.*

Feb 25 Healing Rays Prayer

God bless my daily activities that they may also bless others. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "The generous will themselves be blessed..." Proverbs 22.9

Suggested Hymn: *Where Charity and Love Prevail* (NCH #396)

Mar 4 – Denying and Returning to God

A Course in Miracles teaches:

“Many...do not realize that to deny God is to deny their own Identity...[Child] of God, you have...been much mistaken. Yet this can be corrected and God will help you...You denied [God] because you loved [God]...and...[God] loves you. Remember that what you deny you must have once known. And if you accept denial, you can accept its undoing. Your [God] has not denied you. [God] does not retaliate, but [God] does call to you to return.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 18.12, 15-17):

So the soldiers, their officer, and the [Religious] police arrested Jesus and bound him. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.”

Prayer after readings: *We have all denied our true nature, denied our divine inheritance, denied the goodness of God, denied our calling as miracle workers. God forgive us and help us to forgive ourselves; and God, give us the grace and the courage to return to you who have never left us, who will never leave us. Amen.*

March 4 Healing Rays Prayer

Today, I will not deny, overlook, or take for granted the God-power within me. I claim it. I depend on it. I celebrate it. Amen.

Stewardship Thought

“True generosity is an offering, giving freely and out of pure love, no strings attached.” Suze Orman

Suggested Hymn: *Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ* (NCH #520)

Mar 11 – Truth

Mahatma Gandhi exhorted:

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it--always.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 18.33-38):

Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the [Jewish people]?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” Pilate replied, “I am not [Jewish], am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over....But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”

Prayer after readings: *We may not always know what is true, O God, but may we nevertheless always be seekers of Truth. If we seek, we must eventually find. Amen.*

March 11 Healing Rays Prayer

The truth is that I am a child of God, forever loved by God; and so it is that I rejoice. Amen.

Stewardship Thought

“The world of the generous gets larger and larger.” Proverbs 11.24 (*The Message*)

Suggested Hymn: *Light of God in Me* (Words: Durrell Watkins; Tune: Woodworth, aka “Just As I Am”)

Mar 18 – Staying Strong

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 19.1-7):

Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, the [Jewish King]!” and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.” So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!” When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.”

The [religious authorities] answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

The rest of the Story (9-16):

[Pilate] entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the [those wanting Jesus executed] cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement...Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the [crowds], "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!"

Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, your anointed prophet, Jesus, lived with compassion and courage, even in the most difficult of times. Inspired by him, may we be blessed with compassion and courage. Amen.*

March 18 Healing Rays Prayer

You have created me to be resilient, O God. I give thanks for the strength with which you have blessed me. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Even after all this time, the sun never says to the earth, 'You owe me.' Look what happens with a love like that; it lights the whole sky." Hafiz

Suggested Hymn: *An Outcast Among Outcasts* (NCH #201)

Palm Sunday, March 25 – **Navigating Hope and Horror**

We read in the Psalter (Psalm 24.9-10):

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the [Sovereign] of glory may come in. Who is this [Sovereign] of glory? The LORD of hosts...is the [Sovereign] of glory.

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 12.12-13, NRSV):

...The great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of [God]—the [Sovereign] of Israel!"

The Story continues (John 19.17-22, NRSV):

Carrying the cross by himself, [Jesus] went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the [Jewish people]." Many...read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests...said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King...,' but, 'This man said, I am [the Jewish] King...'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Prayer after readings: *Hosanna! Help us! Keep us safe! Lead us! Hosanna! Amen.*

March 25 Healing Rays Prayer

Dear Lord, help us! Heal us! Renew our hope. Hosanna! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse...and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing." Malachi 3.10

Suggest Hymn: *All Glory, Laud, and Honor* (New Century #216)

Easter Sunday, April 1 – I Have Seen the Lord

Priest and poet John Banister Tabb wrote:

“Out of the dusk a shadow, then, a spark. Out of the cloud a silence, then, a lark.
Out of the heart a rapture, then, a pain. Out of the dead, cold ashes, Life again.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 20.1-16, 18a):

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed... Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? [For] whom are you looking...?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord.”

Prayer after readings: *Our hearts are filled with Alleluias today, O God. Receive our praise and continue to fill us with joy. Amen.*

April 1 Healing Rays Prayer

I give thanks that Resurrection Power blesses my life today. Alleluia! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Of all the varieties of virtue, generosity is the most beloved.” Aristotle

Suggested Hymn(s): *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* (NCH #233); *I Come to the Garden Alone* (ibid. #237); *Now the Green Blade Rises* (ibid. #238); *Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day* (ibid. #241); *The Day of Resurrection* (ibid. #245)

April 8 – Show Me

We read in the Gospel of Thomas (108):

Jesus said, “Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed...”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 20.19-29):

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the [authorities], Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As [I was sent], so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas [gasped], “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Prayer after readings: *Give us light, O God, and hope, and faith, and spiritual commitment. Renew and revive us today, through Christ. Amen.*

April 8 Healing Rays Prayer

May we continue to recognize and celebrate Resurrection Power in our lives. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “God loves a cheerful giver.” The Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 9.7)

Suggested Hymn: *These Things Did Thomas Count* (NCH #254)

April 15 – Transformation

Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaimed:

“...the Highest dwells within us...There is no wall in the soul where we, the effect, cease, and God, the cause, begins...There is deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is accessible to us...Forever and ever the influx of this better and more universal self is new and unsearchable. Within us is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One. When it breaks through our intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through our will, it is virtue; when it flows through our affections, it is love.”

We read in the Acts of the Apostles (9.1-6, 10-11, 17-18):

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”⁵ He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” He answered, “Here I am, Lord.” The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying. So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the *holy Spirit*.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized...

Prayer after readings: *The life of Jesus transformed the life of Paul, even though they had never met. May Jesus' example continue to transform lives, including our own. Amen.*

April 15 Healing Rays Prayer

I am becoming God-Realized and Self-Realized. My journey deeper and deeper into the Mystery I call “God” continues. And so it is.

Stewardship Thought: “Pure love is a willingness to give without a thought of receiving anything in return.” Peace Pilgrim

Suggested Hymn: *I Surrender All* (African American Heritage Hymnal #396)

April 22 – Power of Praise

We read in Acts of the Apostles (16.16-19, 22b-23):

One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought [those who held her in bondage] a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, “These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.” She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.

But when her [overlords] saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities...and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods.²³ After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely.

The Story continues (Acts 16.25-26, 29, 32-34):

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened. The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

Prayer after readings: *Liberating God, praise sustained Paul and Silas during a difficult time, and choosing to praise also helped them find a way out of a bind. There is power in praising! When we praise we are raised. And so it is that we praise you, Holy One. Alleluia! Amen.*

April 22 Healing Rays Prayer

Nothing can rob me of my joy, and so it is that I praise God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “The cultivation of generosity is the beginning of spiritual awakening.” Sharon Salzberg

Suggested Hymn(s): *Praise to the Living God* (New Century #8); *We Praise You O God* (ibid #420)

April 29 – **God of Many Names, Mystery Beyond our Naming**

Ernest Holmes wrote:

“Within Thee is fullness of Life. Within Thee is complete Joy and everlasting Peace. Within Thee is all. Thou art in me and I am in Thee...I am One with the fullness of All Life.”

We read in the Acts of the Apostles (17.16-29):

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, “What does this babbling man want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.” Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it...[the] Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands...since [it is the Lord of heaven and earth that] gives to all mortals life and breath and all things...[This One] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and...allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for...and find [God]—though indeed [this God] is not far from each one of us. For ‘In [this One] we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “we too are [divine] offspring.’

Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.

Prayer after readings: *Omnipresent God, everywhere we look, we find you. Known by many names and in many traditions, you are limited by none of them. You are the Source of all that is good. We are from you and forever we exist in you, and so it is that we rejoice. Amen.*

April 29 **Healing Rays Prayer**

God of many names: we are in you, from you, filled with you, guided by you, and so it is that all is well. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “The habit of giving only enhances the desire to give.” Walt Whitman

Suggested Hymn: *Bring Many Names* (New Century #11)

May 6 – Look for the Good

A Course in Miracles teaches:

“If you knew who walks beside you on the way that you have chosen, fear would be impossible.”

The Apostle Paul wrote (Philippians 1.3-9, 12-18):

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion...

It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight...

I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice...

Prayer after readings: *In every way possible, let us proclaim the goodness of God. Amen.*

May 6 Healing Rays Prayer

Dear God, illumine me with your light, and may your light shine through to me to bless the world, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Giving a tenth of your...income to God's good work...is one of the surest ways to verify within your own consciousness that God is the source of your supply, and to establish a link with that supply itself.” Rev. John W. Adams

Suggested Hymn: *Light of Christ With Us* (Words: Durrell Watkins; Tune: Salve Regina)

Ascension Sunday, May 13 – Uplifted

We read in the Odes of Solomon:

“You renew me, God, by clothing me and holding me in your light...You take to me to Paradise where I know joy, where I worship your glory. Blessed are they planted in your land, in Paradise, who grow...and change from gloom into light...There is much space in Paradise but no wasteland. Everything is filled with your fruit. Praise be to you, O God, the eternal delight of Paradise. Hallelujah!”

(+) The Good News according to Luke (24.49-53):

[Jesus said to his disciples] “And see, I am sending upon you what [was] promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Prayer after readings: *May God uplift us today, and use us to uplift others. Amen.*

May 13 Healing Rays Prayer

Jesus, your message inspires and encourages me; it lifts me up, and I am thankful. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Those who give offerings of gratitude honor God.” Psalm 50.23

Suggested Hymn: *Someone Asked the Question* (NCH #523)

Pentecost, May 20 – Spiritually Empowered

Ralph Helverson wrote:

“We have religion when we hold some hope beyond the present, some self-respect beyond our failures...We have religion when...our nerves are edged by some dream in the heart. We have religion when we have an abiding gratitude for all that we have received. We have religion when we look upon people with all their failings and still find in them good...We have religion when we have done all that we can, and then in confidence entrust ourselves to the life that is larger than ourselves.”

(+) The Good News as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (John 14.15-17):

[Jesus said] “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the [Source of all life], and [the Source] will give you another [Helper], to be with you forever...You know [the Spirit], because [It] abides with you...”

The Story continues (John 20.19b-22):

Jesus came and stood among [his disciples] and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As [I was sent], so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the *holy Spirit*.”

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, give us the grace to embrace the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit. Help us to share wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and reverence for God with the world. Amen.*

May 20 Healing Rays Prayer

“Breathe on me, Breath of God.” Let me receive your gifts and bear your fruits. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Whatever I thankfully receive, as a token of God’s love to me, I part with contentedly as a token of my love to God.” Theophilus Gale

Suggested Hymn(s): *Come and Pray in Us* (Taize); *Every Time I Feel the Spirit* (NCH #282); *Joys are Flowing Like a River* (ibid. #284); *Breathe on Me, Breath of God* (ibid. #292); *Sweet, Sweet Spirit* (ibid. #293)

May 27 – Praying Through Uncertainty

Anne Lamott has written:

“We pray not really knowing what to pray for. We pray not really knowing how to pray. Certain Christians, who will happily tell you they have a monopoly on truth, say that Jesus gave us exact instructions of how and what to pray: the Lord’s Prayer. Isn’t that nice? Thank you, Christians. Love that certainty. It must be great to be so sure of yourselves all the time.”

We read in the Book of Isaiah (6.1-8):

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of [God’s] robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance...each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of [divine] glory.”

The...thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I [have] unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the...the LORD of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your [error] is blotted out.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Prayer after readings: *We aren’t always sure of ourselves, O God. We don’t always feel secure, and yet, we want you to use us to make a positive difference in the world. Hear our prayers and help us do what we can...even help us do some things that we are afraid we can’t. Amen.*

May 27 Healing Rays Prayer

Past mistakes, limitations, fears and regrets have no power over me today. God can equip me and use me to do great things. May it be so.

Stewardship Thought: “Having received new life through the generosity of God...let us give thankfully and abundantly that we may be called God’s generous people.” June Christine Goudey

Suggested Hymn: *Here I Am, Lord* (African American Heritage Hymnal #567)

June 3 – Recharge the Batteries

A reading from the Torah (Deuteronomy 5.12)

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

(+) The Good News according to Mark (3.1-6):

Again [Jesus] entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, we want to gather for worship each week. We want to enjoy the spiritual community. We need a day to rest, to play, to pray, to reenergize, to heal. Bless our day of worship. Help us to recharge our mental, spiritual, and physical batteries. Amen.*

June 3 Healing Rays Prayer

It is a joy to worship you, loving God. In your presence I am whole, serene, and filled with hope. Alleluia!

Stewardship Thought: "I will present to God a tenth of everything God gives me." Genesis 28.22

Suggested Hymn: *Come Sunday* (Singing the Living Tradition #202)

June 10 – Beliefs Matter

Sophia Lyon Fahs wrote:

"It matters what we believe.

Some beliefs are like walled gardens. They encourage exclusiveness, and the feeling of being especially privileged.

Other beliefs are expansive and lead the way into wider and deeper sympathies.

Some beliefs are like shadows, clouding children's days with fears of unknown calamities.

Other beliefs are like sunshine, blessing children with the warmth of happiness.

Some beliefs are divisive, separating the saved from the unsaved, friends from enemies.

Other beliefs are bonds in a world community, where sincere differences beautify the pattern.

Some beliefs are like blinders, shutting off the power to choose one's own direction.

Other beliefs are like gateways opening wide vistas for exploration.

Some beliefs weaken a person's selfhood. They blight the growth of resourcefulness.

Other beliefs nurture self-confidence and enrich the feeling of personal worth.

Some beliefs are rigid, like the body of death, impotent in a changing world.

Other beliefs are pliable, like the young sapling, ever growing with the upward thrust of life."

(+) The Good News according to Mark (3.20-25):

[A] crowd came...[and Jesus' family] went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."

Prayer after readings: *Deliver us, Good God, from oppressive theologies and dangerous dogma. We seek to be the Blessed Community, trusting in your goodness, sharing your love. Amen.*

June 10 Healing Rays Prayer

I get to choose what I believe. Today, I choose to believe in God's goodness, and in the great potential God has given me. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "At its best, giving is an act of worship." Colonel Cornelius J. Dyck

Suggested Hymn: *Fill Me O Power of God* (Words: Durrell Watkins; Tune: Trentham SM)

June 17 – Trust in God

Paul Robeson said:

“Sorrow will one day turn to joy. All that breaks the heart and oppresses the soul will one day give place to peace and understanding and everyone will be free.”

The Prophet Ezekiel wrote (17.22-24):

Thus says the Lord GOD: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar; I will set it out.

I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.

On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar.

Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.

All the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.

I the LORD have spoken; I will accomplish it.”

Prayer after readings: *When we are flourishing, may we help others flourish as well. When we are struggling, may we have our hope renewed and our needs met. Through good times and bad times, guide and bless us, O Lord. Amen.*

June 17 Healing Rays Prayer

I will trust in you, God. Your grace is sufficient. With you, all things are possible. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” Jesus (Mark 12.17)

Suggested Hymn: *O God, Our Help* (Words: v.1, Croft; Words: vs.2-6, Durrell Watkins; Tune: St. Anne CM)

LGBTQ Pride Sunday, June 24 – Who Are We?

We read in the ancient drama of Job (38.1-11):

The LORD [spoke to] Job out of the whirlwind:

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins...I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from [my] womb?—when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors,

and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped’?”

The prophet Jeremiah wrote (38.7a, 11-13):

Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch in the king’s house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. So Ebed-melech took [some] men with him and went to the house of the king, to a wardrobe of the storehouse, and took from there old rags and worn-out clothes, which he let down to Jeremiah in the cistern by ropes. Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, “Just put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes.” Jeremiah did so. Then they drew Jeremiah up by the ropes and pulled him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, you made us in your image. You have given us gifts that we are meant to share. You love us and you bless the love that we give and receive. We are forever yours, and so it is that we rejoice. Amen.*

June 24 Healing Rays Prayer

I am a child of God made in the image of God. I am forever loved by God. And so it is.

Stewardship Thought: “Money is like manure; it’s not worth a thing unless it’s spread around, encouraging things to grow.” Thornton Wilder, *The Matchmaker*

Suggested Hymn(s): *Children of the Rainbow Promise* (The Hymnal Project); *We Are the Church Alive* (The Hymnal Project); *In the Midst of New Dimensions* (NCH #391)

July 1 – **God Can Help**

“Ernest Holmes wrote:

“My Life is in thee, O Inner Presence. I look upon thee and hope springs forth into realization. O Hope within me, undying evidence of good, thou dost completely hold me in thy loving embrace, and from this fond caress assurance shall be born, and confidence and love.”

We read in the Book of Lamentations (3.22-26):

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, [divine] mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in [God].”

[God] is good to the [seeking] soul...It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Prayer after readings: *May we look past circumstances, trends, reports, and fears and see reasons for hope, celebration, and joy. You, dear God, can always make us glad. Amen.*

July 1 **Healing Rays Prayer**

Renew my hope, O God; and reward my hope. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Do not give...as a hen that lays her eggs, and then cackles.” Henry Ward Beecher

Suggested Hymn: *My Trust is in the Name of the Lord*

July 8 – **Grace**

Anne Lamott has written:

“I do not understand the mystery of grace – only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us.”

The Apostle Paul wrote (2 Corinthians 12.2-10):

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of [Mischief] to torment me, to keep me from being too elated.

Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but [the Lord] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.”

So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Prayer after readings: *We thank you God for grace equal to every need. Amen.*

July 8 **Healing Rays Prayer**

Thank you, God, for grace equal to every need. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost.” Ignatius of Loyola

Suggested Hymn(s): *I Need You Every Hour* (NCH #517); *You Are My Hiding Place*

July 15 – **Divine Inheritance**

We read in the Psalter (Psalm 85.8-11):

Let me hear what God...will speak, for [God] will speak peace to [us]. To [the] faithful, to those who turn to [God] in their hearts. Surely...salvation is at hand for those who [revere God]...

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

We read in the epistle to the Ephesians (1.3-14):

Blessed be the God...of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...[God] destined us for adoption...through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of [the divine] will, to the praise of [God's] glorious grace that [was] freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In [Christ] we have redemption ...With all wisdom and

insight [God] has made known to us the mystery of [the divine] will...set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things...things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of [the One] who accomplishes all things...so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of [Christ's] glory...When you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in Christ, [you] were marked with the seal of the promised *holy Spirit*; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of [God's] glory.

Prayer after readings: *Mother-Father God, we ask you to give us the blessings we need most, and through us, may your blessings reach others. Amen.*

July 15 **Healing Rays Prayer**

I am a child of God. I have a divine inheritance. Blessings abound! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "To give without any reward, or any notice, has a special quality of its own." Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Suggested Hymn: *Now Thank We All Our God* (Singing the Living Tradition #32)

July 22 – **Unity**

The spiritual teacher Starhawk has written the following prayer:

"Earth mother, star mother, you who are called by a thousand names, may all remember we are cells in your body and dance together. You are the grain and the loaf that sustains us each day, and as you are patient with our struggles to learn so shall we be patient with ourselves and each other. We are radiant light and sacred dark – the balance – you are the embrace that heartens and the freedom beyond fear. Within you we are born, we grow, live, and die – you bring us around the circle to rebirth, within us you dance. Forever."

We read in the epistle to the Ephesians (2.11-15, 17-22):

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision"—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near, by...Christ [who] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace...

So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the [Creator]. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Prayer after the readings: *Mother-Father God, you cross cultures, time, languages, traditions, customs and symbols to bind us all together, to weave us into a single tapestry of life. We are one in you and one with you. May your boundless love heal our wounds and inspire us to love more. Amen.*

July 22 **Healing Rays Prayer**

God is my Source. I am forever connected to my Source. And so it is that all is well. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "The measure of a life is not its duration, but its donation." Rev. Peter Marshall

Suggested Hymn: *Help Us Accept Each Other* (NCH #388)

July 29 – **Covenant Relationship**

We read in the Book of Ruth (1.1-14):

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab...and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal

kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.” Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. They said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you...Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

The Story continues (Ruth 1.15-22):

So [Naomi] said [to Ruth],

“See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

But Ruth said,

“Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried...[Not] even death [will part] me from you!”

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, “Is this Naomi?” She said to them, “Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for [life] has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but [I have come] back empty...”

So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab.

They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Prayer after readings: *Covenant keeping God, you call us into covenantal relationships and you bless those relationships, and so it is that we thank you. Amen.*

July 29 Healing Rays Prayer

I affirm that God's love will never let me go, and this brings me boundless joy. Alleluia!

Stewardship Thought: “This church cannot survive without your faith, your confidence, your enthusiasm, your generosity. Its destiny, the larger hope, rests in your hands.” Michael A. Schuler

Suggested Hymn: *What a Covenant* (NCH #471)

August 5 – Possibilities Beyond Problems

We read in the Book of Ruth (2.1-13):

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." She said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you." They answered, "The LORD bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "[Who is this young woman?]" The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment."

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to [these] young women. Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?" But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from...the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!" Then she said, "May I continue to find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants."

The Story continues (Ruth 2.14-20):

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, and eat some of this bread, and dip your morsel in the sour wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped up for her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. When she got up to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, "Let her glean even among the standing sheaves, and do not reproach her. You must also pull out some handfuls for her from the bundles, and leave them for her to glean, and do not rebuke her." So she gleaned in the field until evening...

She...came into the town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gleaned. Then she took out and gave her what was left over after she herself had been satisfied. Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he...whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a relative of ours, one of our nearest kin."

Prayer after readings: *Loving God, you often help us find a way where at first there seemed to be no way. Thank you, God. Amen.*

August 5 Healing Rays Prayer

With your help, God, I will look for possibilities beyond problems. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "There must be giving as well as receiving, in order to maintain a perfect balance." Ernest Holmes

Suggested Hymn(s): *God Will Take Care of You* (African American Heritage Hymnal #137); *God Will Make a Way*

August 12 – We Can Make a Difference

We read in the Book of Ruth (3.1-9):

Naomi...said to [her daughter-in-law Ruth], "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you...Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."

So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin."

The Story continues (Ruth 3.10-18):

He said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do

it. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the LORD lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning.”

So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, “It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” Then he said, “Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city. She came to her mother-in-law, who said, “How did things go with you, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, “He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, ‘Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.”

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, your grace, compassion, mercy, and kindness fill us with hope and joy. We become conduits of your love when we show kindness to others. Remind us that our love is part of your love. Amen.*

August 12 Healing Rays Prayer

Thanks be to God for the kindnesses I have received and for those that I have offered and will offer. Kindness is the language of God. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “You can give without loving; but you cannot love without giving.” Amy Carmichael

Suggested Hymn: *What Wondrous Love* (Singing the Living Tradition #18)

August 19 – Healing Past Hurts

We read in the Book of Ruth (4.1-10):

No sooner had Boaz gone up to the gate and sat down there than the next-of-kin, of whom Boaz had spoken, came passing by. So Boaz said, “Come over, friend; sit down here.” And he went over and sat down. Then Boaz took ten...of the elders of the city, and said, “Sit down here”; so they sat down. He then said to the next-of-kin, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it, and say: Buy it in the presence of those sitting here, and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not, tell me, so that I may know; for there is no one prior to you to redeem it, and I come after you.” So he said, “I will redeem it.” Then Boaz said, “The day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to maintain the dead man’s name on his inheritance.” At this, the next-of-kin said, “I cannot redeem it for myself without damaging my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one took off a sandal and gave it to the other; this was the manner of attesting in Israel. So when the next-of-kin said to Boaz, “Acquire it for yourself,” he took off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have acquired from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to [her sons]. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the [widow] of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man’s name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses.”

The Story continues (Ruth 4.11-17):

Then all the people who were at the gate, along with the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children...and, through the children that the LORD will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin...[who] shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him.” Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Prayer after readings: *Ruth and Naomi suffered loss, hardship, and uncertainty, but love and hope sustained them, kindness and compassion aided them, and in time, they built a new life filled with joy and peace. This sacred story reminds us, God, that you are with us in the hard times and you are leading us to better days. Thank you, God. Amen.*

August 19 Healing Rays Prayer

God is with me in the hard times to comfort and encourage me and to lead me to better days. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “If American Christians were to give from their income generously – not lavishly, mind you, only generously – they could transform the world, starting right away.” Christian Smith, Michael Emerson, & Patricia Snell

Suggested Hymn: *Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior* (New Century #551)

August 26 – **Divine Armor**

Winston Churchill said:

“Success is not final; failure is not fatal – it is the courage to continue that counts.”

We read in the epistle to the Ephesians (6.10-19)

Finally, be strong in the Lord...Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against [oppression]. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of [wickedness]. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.

Prayer after readings: *Let us equip ourselves with optimism, courage, faith, and love; and may we use these tools effectively to help ourselves heal and to also help heal others. Amen.*

August 26 **Healing Rays Prayer**

God grant me hope, peace, joy, love, courage, and wisdom, and help me use these gifts wisely for my good and the good of others. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Whatever you want more of, give it away. I am a big believer in tithing...I believe that [what we give] does indeed come back multiplied.” Jack Canfield

Suggested Hymn: *You Are My Hiding Place*

September 2 – Generous Living

Edwene Gaines teaches:

“The real purpose of the tithe is to acknowledge that God is the source of our good and that we are aware and grateful for the good in our lives. Of course God doesn’t need your money. You need to give because tithing...increases our faith and pushes us through conscious fear. When we tithe, we give back to the universe, and when the universe gives back to us...we learn that we cannot out give God.”

(+) The Good News according to Luke (12.13-21):

Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich [person] produced abundantly. And [the person] thought..., ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then [the person] said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to [the person], ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

Prayer after readings: *Gracious and giving God, we wish to be generous people. We wish to share time, talent, and treasure in ways that bring joy to ourselves and to others. We wish to be part of building up the Blessed Community where the sacred value of all people is affirmed. Please bless our good wishes and our faithful efforts. Amen.*

September 2 Healing Rays Prayer

God of Abundance, bless the gifts we gladly share and may our sharing increase our faith in your goodness. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do.” Helen Keller

Suggested Hymn: *You Can’t Beat God Giving* (African American Heritage Hymnal #671)

September 9 – Facing Life’s Storms

Rabindranath Tagore opined:

“Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add color to my sunset sky.”

Robert Schuller said:

“Never make your most important decisions when you are in your worst moods. Wait. Be patient. The storm will pass.”

(+) The Good News according to Matthew (8.24-27):

A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat [that Jesus and his disciples were in] was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

Prayer after the readings: *We are thankful, God, that you are with us in the time of storm. We are also grateful that the storms always pass, and a new day with new blessings always dawns. Amen.*

September 9 Healing Rays Prayer

When life is stormy, may I have peace within. When the skies seem gloomy, may the light of hope shine through me. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “The truth about tithing is that [those who do it]...find that their...fear of poverty disappears.” Emmet Fox

Suggested Hymn: *Till the Storm Passes By*

September 16 – Immersion in Divine Love

Nona Brooks said:

"...each one of us has a right to say, 'I am born of God; I am included in God; I am inseparable from God'...to know God aright is to know Self aright in God, of God, like God."

Fannie Brooks James said:

"Through knowledge of the one Presence as all in all, we are made conscious of...the unfailing power of the universal Spirit...ever present within each soul."

(+) The Good News according to Matthew (28.19-20)

[Jesus said], Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Prayer after readings: *You have commissioned us, good Lord, to share the good news of your all inclusive and unconditional love. May we answer the call. Amen.*

September 16 Healing Rays Prayer

May I and those I touch each day be immersed in an awareness of divine Love. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Giving is a journey, a calling, a way of living. It's not a separate part of life – it *is* life, turning your beliefs and values into action and impact." Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen

Suggested Hymn: *O Holy God, Whose Gracious Power* (New Century #535)

September 23 – Take the High Road

We read in the Torah (Genesis 39.6b-8a, 11-14)

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. ⁷ And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." But he refused...

One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house, she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice."

(+) The Good News according to Matthew (5.11-12)

[Jesus said] "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, even when others vilify us, demonize us, or make false claims against us, we will affirm our sacred value, we will try to do what is right, we will take the high road and we will know that in time, Truth will prevail. Amen.*

September 23 Healing Rays Prayer

I will take the high road. Truth will prevail. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "I like to give willingly; when I give willingly, I enjoy it so much I give again." Anonymous

Suggested Hymn: *Gentle Shepherd, Come and Lead Us* (The Hymnal Project)

September 30 – Infinite Possibilities

We read in the Torah (Exodus 14.10-14)

As Pharaoh drew near [to the fleeing Israelites], the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out...They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

The Story continues: (Exodus 14.21-25)

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic...Their chariot wheels [got stuck]...The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

Prayer after readings: *Spirit of liberation, you make a way for us and you show us the way. Now give us the courage to move forward. Give us the grace to embrace a future with infinite possibilities. Amen.*

September 30 Healing Rays Prayer

The past is past and the future has infinite possibilities. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "I have held many things in my hand, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands - that I still possess." Martin Luther

Suggested Hymn: *A Mighty Fortress is our God* (Singing the Living Tradition #200)

October 7 – Soaring with the Eagles

We read in the Book of Isaiah (40.31):

Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

We read in the Torah (Exodus 19.3-4)

Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "...You have seen...how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."

We read in the Torah (Deuteronomy 32.10-12a)

[God] sustained [you] in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; [God]...cared for [you], guarded [you] as the apple of [God's own] eye.

As an eagle stirs up [her] nest, and hovers over [her] young; as [she] spreads [her] wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on [her] pinions, the [HOLY ONE] alone guided [you].

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, like a mother eagle guarding her eaglets and teaching them to fly, you nurture us, watch over us, guide us, and provide for us. We trust your loving care and for it, we are thankful. Amen.*

October 7 Healing Rays Prayer

Mothering God, you nurture me, guide me, watch over me, and provide for me; and so it is that I am thankful. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "People who make it their daily intention to give and serve typically feel fulfilled." Michael J. Chase

Suggested Hymn: *When Israel Camped in Sinai* (The Hymnal Project)

October 14 – Resisting Temptation

(+) The Good News according to Matthew (4.1-7)

[After his baptism] Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted...

He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written [in Deuteronomy],

'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the [tempter] took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written [in the 91st Psalm],

'[God] will command...angels concerning you,'

and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written [in Deuteronomy], 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

The Story continues (Matthew 4.8-11)

Again, the [tempter] took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "[Get away from me]! for it is written [throughout scripture],

'Worship [and serve] the Lord your God...only...'"

Then the [tempter] left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Prayer after readings: *Lord, sometimes we are tempted to sell out, to give up, to forget who we are and what we can do. Help us to resist such temptations and to emerge from such desert times renewed and full of hopeful determination to be better than we've been and to do more than we've done. Amen.*

October 14 Healing Rays Prayer

Lord, help me resist the temptation to be less than I can be. Help me be my best, for the sake of your love. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "There are few ways of spiritual enrichment like the exercise of faithful stewardship." Stephen Olford

Suggested Hymn: *Forty Days and Forty Nights* (NCH #205)

October 21 – **Always Another Chance**

We read in the Psalter (Psalm 51.10-12):

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

We read in the Book of Second Samuel (12.1-7a):

The LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him."

Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"

Prayer after readings: *We have all fallen short of our highest ideals. We have all made mistakes. We all have our share of regrets. But you, God, can restore us to wholeness. You can help us get back on the right track. You can help us make wise choices going forward. Please do so. Amen.*

October 21 **Healing Rays Prayer**

God, you know the mistakes I've made, and I know that your healing grace gives me another chance. It's never too late. I give thanks for this new day and for the blessings it offers. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "When you tithe, you notice your life simply flows better." Christiane Schull

Suggested Hymn(s): *For the Healing of the Nations* (NCH #576); *O For a World* (NCH #575); *Amazing Grace* (Singing the Living Tradition #205)

October 28 – **Prayer Power**

Myrtle Fillmore wrote:

"Think of God...as being already within you...It is the God in the midst of us that frees and heals...Prayer is an exercise to change our thoughts habits and our living habits...Prayer, then, is to change our minds and hearts so that God's omnipresent good may...manifest in our lives."

(+) The Good News according to Luke (11.1-4)

[Jesus] was praying..., and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

[Abba], hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."

Prayer after readings: *Good God in which we dwell and which dwells in us, grant us the blessings we need most. Help us be the best version of ourselves, and do not leave us in times of trouble but deliver us to hope, peace, and joy. Amen.*

October 28 **Healing Rays Prayer**

One with God, I declare that blessings are at hand. Healing, success, harmony and more are possible for me. Thank you, God! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Give alms in proportion to what you own. If you have great wealth give alms out of your abundance. If you have but little, distribute even some of that. But do not hesitate to give alms." Tobit 4.8

Suggested Hymn: *Every Time I Feel the Spirit*

November 4 – **Healing**

Sai Baba taught:

“Love one another and help others to rise to the higher levels, simply by pouring out love. Love is infectious and the greatest healing energy.”

Marianne Williamson tells us:

“The only work that will ultimately bring any good to any of us is the work of contributing to the healing of the world.”

(+) The Good News according to Matthew (8.2-3)

There was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.” He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, please heal us in whatever way we most need healing, and may your healing love flow through us to heal others. Amen.*

November 4 **Healing Rays Prayer**

Dear God, give me the grace to believe in, expect, accept, be grateful for, and share healing. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “I like to think of [tithing] as giving back to Life.” Louise Hay

Suggested Hymn: *O God, Our Help in Ages Past* (Singing the Living Tradition #281)

November 11 – **What God Requires**

Jesus scholar Marcus Borg wrote:

“The point is not that Jesus was a good guy who accepted everybody, and thus we should do the same (though that would be good). Rather, his teachings and behavior reflect an alternative social vision. Jesus was not talking about how to be good and how to behave within the framework of a domination system. He was a critic of the domination system itself.”

The Prophet Micah wrote (6.6-8)

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before [God] with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn...?

[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Prayer after readings: *Holy One, we wish to be justice workers, peace makers, healers, helpers, harbingers of your kin-dom, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

November 11 **Healing Rays Prayer**

May I have a heart for justice, a soul full of compassion, and a gracious attitude that will give me peace of mind and that will also bless the world around me. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: “Freely have we received of gifts that minister to our needs of body and spirit. Gladly we bring to our church and its wide concerns a portion of this bounty.” Arthur Foote II

Suggested Hymn: *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise* (The Hymnal Project)

November 18 – **Let There Be Peace**

Henri Nouwen asked:

“Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions.”

Mother Teresa said:

“Peace begins with a smile.”

We read in the Book of Isaiah (2.1-4):

The word that [came to] Isaiah...:

In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob [and Leah and Rachel]...that we may walk in [righteous] paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

[God] shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Prayer after readings: *Dear God, we choose to believe today that peace is possible. Grant us peace. Amen.*

November 18 **Healing Rays Prayer**

God offers a peace that passes understanding. I claim that peace for myself today. I share it with the world. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4.10

Suggested Hymn: *I've Got Peace Like a River* (Singing the Living Tradition #100); *God of the Ages, Who with Sure Command* (New Century #592)

Thanksgiving Eve, November 21 – **Give Thanks**

We read in 1 Chronicles 16, verse 34:

O give thanks to the LORD, [who] is good; for [God's] steadfast love endures forever.

Prayer after the scripture verse: *For your many blessings, we give you thanks and praise, holy God. Amen.*

Suggested Hymn(s): *Come, O Thankful People, Come* (NCH #422); *Great Are You Lord* (Steve & Vikki Cook)

Reign of Christ, November 25 – **Reign of Christ**

Catholic Worker Movement pioneer Dorothy Day wrote:

"People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There's too much work to do."

We read in the epistle to the Colossians (1.27):

...God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

(+) The Good News according to John (12.15)

"Do not be afraid...Look, your [sovereign] is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

Prayer after readings: *Inward Light, we still bask in your rays that streamed from Jesus of Nazareth. May we notice your glow today emanating from ourselves and from all who live in love and seek Truth. Amen.*

November 25 **Healing Rays Prayer**

In the name of the Consciousness of Christ, I affirm hope and healing, peace and power, joy and justice for my life and for my world. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Think of giving not as a duty but as a privilege." John D. Rockefeller

Suggested Hymn: *Ride On! Ride On in Majesty* (NCH #215)

Advent 1, December 2 – **Faith**

The prophet Habakkuk wrote (1.2-4):

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen?

Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?

Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?

Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails.

The wicked surround the righteous—therefore judgment comes forth perverted.

The Story continues: (Hab. 2.1-4):

I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what [God] will say to me, and what [God] will answer concerning my complaint.

Then the LORD answered me and said: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.

For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

The rest of the Story: (Hab. 3.17-19)

Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; [God] makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights.

Prayer after readings: *Give us faith, O God, to hold fast to the vision of justice, the vision of healing, the vision of joy. By faith we see and move toward abundant blessings. May we never give up on our divinely inspired dream. Amen.*

December 2 **Healing Rays Prayer**

I wish to be faithful, and to trust in God’s goodness at all times. Let it be so.

Stewardship Thought: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Jesus (Acts 20.35)

Suggested Hymn(s): *Comfort, Comfort O My People* (New Century Hymnal #101); *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* v.1 (NCH #116)

Advent 2, December 9 – **Courage**

We read in the Story of Esther (4.1-9):

When Mordecai learned [that his people were being threatened]...[he] tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; he went up to the entrance of the king’s gate, for no one might enter the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth. In every province, wherever the king’s command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

When Esther’s maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them. Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate, and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king’s treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people.

The Story continues: (Esther 4.10-17)

Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days.”

When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”

Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.” Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Prayer after readings: *We give thanks, loving God, for the gifts of conscience and character, conviction and courage. As we may need them, please allow them to flow into our hearts. Amen.*

December 9 Healing Rays Prayer

I deny that fear has any power over my life. I am a child of God, entitled to peace and joy. I am strong in the Lord! And so it is.

Stewardship Thought: "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." Sir Winston Churchill

Suggested Hymn(s): *We Hail You God's Anointed* (NCH #104); *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel v.2* (NCH #116)

Advent 3, December 16 – Light

We read in the Book of Isaiah (42.1, 5a, 6-9):

[God declares] "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations."

Thus says God, the LORD... "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them."

(+) The Good News according to Matthew (12.15b-16):

Many crowds followed [Jesus], and he cured all of them, and he ordered them not to make him known.

Prayer after readings: *In Jesus we discover that faithful service allows a light to shine forth through us to help guide and comfort the world. May we follow the Christ light; may we let it shine in our own lives. Amen.*

December 16 Healing Rays Prayer

Divine Light surrounds me, shows me the path that is best for me, and shines through me to encourage others. I am grateful for the light of God's love. Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Jesus (Luke 6.38)

Suggested Hymn(s): *Jesus, the Light of the World* (NCH #160); *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel v.4* (NCH #116)

Advent 4, December 23 – Presence

We read in the Psalter (Psalm 46.1-3):

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

(+) The Good News according to Matthew (1.18-25):

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the *holy* Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the *holy* Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will [rescue] his people..."

All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by...the prophet:

"Look, the [young woman] shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Prayer after readings: *Jesus' story reminds us that even in the most humble, uncertain, or trying of circumstances, God is with us; and so it is that we thank you, God, for your love that will never let us go. Amen.*

December 23 Healing Rays Prayer

I am in your loving presence, God, now and always. And so it is that I rejoice! Amen.

Stewardship Thought: "Giving and receiving are one in truth." *A Course in Miracles*

Suggested Hymn(s): *Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child* (NCH #136); *What Child is This* (NCH #148); *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel v.6* (NCH #116)

Xmas Eve, December 24 – The Nativity

Hear the Magnificat, the Song of Mary (Luke 1.46-54)

And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, [who] has looked with favor on [me]...Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is [God's] name.

[Divine] mercy is for those who [seek God] from generation to generation.

[God] has shown strength...[and] has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

[God] has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

[God] has filled the hungry with good things, and sent [exploiters] away empty.

[God] has helped [the people of God]..."

Hear the words of Howard Thurman:

"When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, ...when the shepherds are back with their flock, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the brothers [and sisters], to make music in the heart."

(+) The Good News according to Luke (2.7-14, 16, 20m KJV):

And [Mary] brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward [all people].

And [the shepherds] came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Prayer after readings: *Loving God, tonight we celebrate the miracle of a manger, angels that can be found in lonely places, and the profound holiness that can be expressed in a baby's face. Even in unlikely places, your grace is sufficient, and tonight we celebrate that grace and we give you thanks. Amen.*

December 24 Healing Rays Prayer

Wherever I am, whatever I am facing, may I be a magnet for miracles. Amen.

Suggested Carols: All the faves

December 30 – God's House

Ernest Holmes wrote:

"My thought is in Thee, Inner Light. My words are from Thee, Inner Wisdom. My understanding is of Thee, Inner God. I cannot be hid from Thee, my inspiration and my life."

(+) The Good News according to Luke (2.41-52):

Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my [Family's] house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Prayer after readings: *We delight, O God, to come together in your house, to learn, to love, to share, to grow. These are sacred moments that we share and treasure in our hearts. Amen.*

December 30 Healing Rays Prayer

In God's house I am learning, sharing, and growing. And so it is.

Stewardship Thought: "Let there be an offering to sustain and strengthen this place which is sacred to so many of us, a community of memory and of hope, for we are now the keepers of the dream." Brandoch L. Lovely

Suggested Hymn(s): Christmas carols